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August 25, 2005

Honorable Joe Barton
Chairman,
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The undersigned scientific and engineering research and education organizations are writing to express our concern about the review the Energy and Commerce Committee has undertaken of the climate change research results reported by Drs. Michael E. Mann, Raymond S. Bradley, and Malcolm K. Hughes.

While Congress certainly has the power and authority to request appropriate information to assist it with its law-making and oversight duties, it is critical that the information requested be relevant to the topic being discussed. It is also critical that the information be reviewed and analyzed using appropriate professional resources available to the Congress. In this matter, it appears that the Committee has (1) opened an investigation rather than employing less intimidating Congressional tools; (2) asked for documents that do not seem to bear directly on the Committee's stated interest in the debate over the extent of climate change; and (3) has apparently sought information from only one side in the ongoing debate.

As you know, the peer review process is the mechanism by which scientists review and critique each others' work. The process is not flawless, but it has served science and the nation very well over many years – the evidence is in the technological innovations all around us. Like other scientific research, Dr. Mann's work has no right to go unchallenged, and it has not been unchallenged. It has been vetted through the peer review process and will continue to be scrutinized by researchers working on similar or related scientific problems. Any legitimate research results that are at odds with Dr. Mann's results and the products of other researchers' work will be received openly by the scientific community, and will in turn be subject to similar scrutiny. Given the policy implications of work relating to climate change, Congress should certainly monitor and review the results of the scientific or engineering debate. But an investigation would seem to imply some sort of wrongdoing; a review of a scientific debate does not require an investigation, nor should it be focused on only one side of the debate.

Congress has numerous ways to gain unbiased insight into the complex differences of interpretation and data analysis that are inherent in the research process. For example, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Research Council, with their access to the world's best scientists and engineers, can be of assistance. We strongly urge the Committee to give serious consideration to using such a forum.

It is important that the nation's scientists and engineers continue to use their knowledge and results openly to inform public policy debates; they should not need to fear that they will be investigated if a Member of Congress disagrees with their conclusions.

Sincerely,

American Astronomical Society
American Chemical Society
American Educational Research Association
American Institute for Medical and Biological
Engineering
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Mathematical Society
American Psychological Association
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Limnology and
Oceanography
Arctic Research Consortium of the
United States
ASEE Engineering Deans Council
ASME NSF Task Force
Association for Women in Mathematics
Association of American Geographers
Association of American Universities
Consortium for Oceanographic Research
and Education

Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council on Undergraduate Research
Crop Science Society of America
DOSECC, Inc.
Ecological Society of America
Federation of Behavioral, Psychological,
and Cognitive Sciences
Joint Oceanographic Institutions
Linguistic Society of America
Mathematical Association of America
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Council for Science and the
Environment
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Soil Science Society of America
University Corporation for Atmospheric
Research
University of Cincinnati